

IN THE CLAIMS

1-22. (Canceled)

23. (Currently Amended) A method of forming a vehicle design index, comprising:

providing a plurality of computerized design tools, said tools being adapted for carrying out a design task of a particular system of the vehicle, at least some of which tools store information restricted to viewing by a respective limited group of workers, which workers are assigned to a different particular system or systems of the vehicle;

gathering, by a computer, from the plurality of computerized design tools, information on elements of ~~the~~ different systems of the vehicle, wherein the gathering includes retrieving from at least one of the computerized tools information on fewer than all the elements of the vehicle required for design of the system described by the tool;

storing the gathered information in the index; and

opening the index for viewing by workers assigned to a plurality of systems of the of all the groups of workers vehicle,

wherein storing the information in the index comprises storing only information which is authorized for viewing by workers of the company from all of the groups of workers assigned to the plurality of systems.

24. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 23, wherein gathering the information comprises gathering ~~location~~ information on the location of the elements in the vehicle.

25. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 23, wherein gathering the information comprises gathering interconnection information of the elements.

26. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 23, wherein gathering the information comprises gathering references to documents describing the elements.

27-29. (Canceled)

30. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 23, wherein gathering the information comprises gathering information on elements of an aircraft.

31. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 23, wherein gathering the information comprises gathering the information periodically.

32. (Currently Amended) A method of providing information between workers designing different systems of a vehicle, comprising: providing a plurality of different types of computerized design tools, each having stored therein sufficient information for carrying out a design task of a respective system of the vehicle, the tools including at least a hydraulic design tool storing hydraulic design information and an electrical design tool storing electrical design information;

gathering, for each of a plurality of elements of the vehicle, information regarding the element, including an indication of the relative assembly interaction of the a gathered element with elements other than those in the same system as the gathered element and a reference to a worker in charge of the element;

storing the gathered information in a database having a record for each of the plurality of elements, wherein the database includes information from each of said design tools, said information including only a subset of said hydraulic design information and said electronic design information;

opening the database for viewing by workers of a plurality of departments, assigned to different systems or engineering disciplines of the vehicle;

searching the database, by a first worker assigned to one system or technical discipline of the vehicle, for information on one or more of the elements; and

performing at least one of:

displaying information relating to the one or more elements; and

sending an electronic message, ~~by the first worker~~, to a second worker assigned to another system or engineering discipline of the vehicle, ~~based on responsive~~ information found in the search.

33. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 32, wherein gathering the information comprises gathering references to documents related to the elements.

34. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 32, wherein the indication of the relative assembly of the element comprises at least one indication of the location of the element in the vehicle.

35. (Original) A method according to claim 34, wherein the at least one indication of the location of the element comprises an indication of the coordinates of the element within the vehicle.
36. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 34, wherein the at least one indication of the location of the element comprises an indication of an access door to the element within the vehicle.
37. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 34, wherein the at least one indication of the location of the element comprises an indication of a compartment in which the element is located.
38. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 32, wherein the indication of the relative assembly of the element comprises a list of elements with which the element is connected.
39. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 32, wherein the indication of the relative assembly of the element comprises an indication of a system to which the element belongs.
40. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 39, wherein the indication of the system to which the element belongs comprises an indication of a function of the element within the system.
41. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 72, comprising running a verification routine which finds design faults, on the data contained within the database.
42. (Original) A method according to claim 41, wherein running the verification routine comprises running a routine which checks for elements which are distanced from each other less than a minimal allowed distance.
43. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 32, wherein the database does not include diagrams or drawings.

44-49. (Cancelled)

50. (Currently Amended) A method of referencing workers working on an aircraft, comprising:

providing a working environment including a plurality of different departments, assigned to perform design tasks of respective different aircraft systems;

~~assigning configuration management codes to various systems of the aircraft;~~

~~assigning each part of the aircraft, a part number code which includes the assigned configuration management code of the system to which the part belongs;~~

~~generating worker codes for at least some parts of the system that indicate which include the configuration management code of the system on which the worker works in worker responsibility for design of that part designing the aircraft; and~~

~~storing records identifying the workers using the assigned codes in a database associating each of the worker codes with one or more workers responsible for said design.~~

51. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 50, wherein ~~the configuration management codes comprise three digits~~ at least some of the workers are associated with more than one of the worker codes.

52. (Cancelled).

53. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 32, wherein gathering the information comprises gathering a plurality of different indications of the relative assembly of the element.

54. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 32, wherein gathering the information comprises gathering at least three levels of a hierarchy of systems and sub-systems to which the major elements belong.

55. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 32, wherein gathering for each of a plurality of elements comprises gathering only for elements which are related to by a plurality of different computerized design tools.

56. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 32, wherein the indication of the relative assembly comprises an indication in each record of elements which are functionally related to the element described by the record.
57. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 32, wherein the vehicle is an aircraft or ship and including storing the gathered information in the database comprises storing in a database having a total storage space of less than 1Gbyte.
58. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 57, wherein storing the gathered information in the database comprises storing in a database having a total storage space of less than 100Mbytes.
59. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 32, wherein gathering for each of a plurality of elements comprises gathering for fewer than 10% of the physical elements of the vehicle, described by the computerized design tools.
60. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 33, wherein the references to the documents comprise hypertext links.
61. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 33, wherein the references to the documents comprise references to diagrams including the elements.
62. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 33, wherein the references to the documents comprise references to procurement invoices of the elements.
63. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 32, wherein each of the elements is identified in the database by a unique code which is assigned according to a functionality of the element.
64. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 32, wherein gathering the information comprises gathering from at least one computerized tool such that an update of information in the at least one computerized tool automatically updates the database.

65. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 64, wherein changing the content of the index is allowed only through the gathering from the computerized tools.
66. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 32, comprising incorporating output information of at least one data evaluation program into the database.
67. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 66, wherein the at least one data evaluation program comprises a design-to-cost program.
68. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 66, wherein the at least one data evaluation program comprises a design-for-manufacture-and-assembly program.
69. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 32, wherein storing the information comprises storing on a portable computer.
70. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 32, wherein the database is open for viewing by all workers working on the vehicle, while changing the database is allowed only to specific workers responsible for changing the database.
71. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 32, comprising viewing in the database, by a worker, information on systems of the vehicle other than the worker is responsible for.
72. (Previously Presented) A method of providing information between workers designing a vehicle, comprising:
- providing a working environment including a plurality of different departments, assigned to perform design tasks of respective different vehicle systems;
 - selecting a plurality, but fewer than 10%, of the physical elements of each system of the vehicle to serve as major elements of the vehicle;
 - gathering, for each of the major elements, information regarding the element, including an indication of the relative assembly of the element in the vehicle and a reference to a worker in charge of the element;
 - storing the gathered information in a database, having records only for the major elements;
 - searching the database for information on one or more of the major elements; and

performing at least one of:

displaying information relating to the one or more major elements; and
sending an electronic message to a worker in charge of the element based on information found in the search.

73. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 72, wherein gathering the information comprises gathering at least three levels of a hierarchy of systems and sub-systems to which the major elements belong.
74. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 72, wherein selecting the major elements comprises selecting fewer than 1% of the physical elements of the vehicle.
75. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 23, wherein the index is open for viewing by all workers working on the vehicle, while changing the index is allowed only to workers responsible for changing the data of the index.
76. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 23, wherein gathering the information comprises gathering information on both electrical and mechanical elements.
77. (Currently Amended) Apparatus for forming a vehicle design index, comprising:
a memory for storing the index; and
a computer configured to gather, from a plurality of computerized design tools, each of the tools adapted for designing a different system of a vehicle by performing a plurality of design tasks, information on fewer than all the elements of the vehicle ~~described~~ utilized by the tool in performing said design tasks, such that the gathered information does not include sufficient information for performing at least some any of said design tasks for which the computerized design tools are adapted, and to store the gathered information in the memory.
- 78-79. (Canceled)
80. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 23, comprising initiating communication between workers designing the vehicle using different computerized tools, using information in the index.

81. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 23, wherein gathering information on elements of the vehicle comprises gathering general information authorized for viewing by workers ~~of the company~~ from a plurality of departments on elements having some details restricted to viewing by a limited group of workers.
82. (Currently Amended) A method, comprising:
providing computerized design tools ~~of for different various~~ systems of the vehicle;
designing various systems of the vehicle by workers using the computerized design tools;
generating a database including information on the relationship between elements of the vehicle from ~~different the various~~ systems, but including information on fewer than all the elements of the vehicle, said database being open to viewing by workers assigned to a plurality of said systems;
opening the database for viewing by a workersworker of a plurality of departments, assigned to ~~different a particular systems system~~ of the vehicle;
determining from the database, by ~~one of the worker~~[[s]], which elements of systems other than the system to which the worker is assigned, are directly affected by a possible change in an element of the vehicle in the system to which the worker is assigned; and
performing at least one of:
displaying information relating to ~~the one or more of said major affected~~ elements;
and
sending an electronic message to at least one workers in charge of the elements determined to be affected by the change, to discuss the possible change.
83. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 82, wherein generating the database comprises generating a database including ~~less fewer~~ than 10% of the elements of the vehicle, ~~described utilized~~ by the design tools in designing the vehicle.
84. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 82, wherein generating the database comprises generating a database ~~not including sufficient~~ information insufficient to allow performing all the design tasks of the vehicle, which can be performed by the computerized tools.

85. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 82, wherein contacting workers in charge of the elements comprises determining the identities of the contacted workers, from the database.

86. (Previously Presented) A method of providing information between workers designing a vehicle, comprising:

providing a working environment including a plurality of different departments, assigned to perform design tasks of respective different vehicle systems or disciplines;

selecting fewer than 10% of the physical elements of each of the systems of the vehicle to serve as major elements of the vehicle;

gathering, for each of the major elements, information regarding the element, including an indication of a relative assembly of the element in the vehicle and a reference to a worker in charge of the element;

storing the gathered information in a database, having records only for the major elements; managing in the database, for each selected element, an action item list including listings of at least one of actions related to the element which need to be performed or which were performed;

opening the database for viewing by workers of a plurality of departments, assigned to different systems or disciplines of the vehicle;

searching the database for information on one or more of the major elements, which may be affected by a possible change to the designed vehicle;

contacting a worker in charge of the element based on information found in the search; and

discussing with the contacted worker the proposed change.

87. (New) A method of design of an aircraft or ship, comprising:

(a) providing a plurality of design tools each particular tool having a group of authorized users and each containing information regarding parts used in an aircraft or ship under design sufficient to design a portion of the aircraft or ship using the particular design tool;

(b) providing a database containing information regarding fewer than all the parts needed for using any of the design tools and having information regarding parts used for a plurality of said design tools;

(c) providing access to the database to authorized users of more than one design tool; and

(d) utilizing the one design tool and information not contained in the one design tool but contained in the database to design or modify a part by an authorized user of the one design tool.

88. (New) A method according to claim 86 wherein the contained information is limited to data that is essential to each authorized user for determining possible problems connected with issues the user is not qualified to solve and does not have primary responsibility for.

89. (New) A method according to claim 23 wherein workers assigned to said plurality of systems includes workers assigned to all the systems.

90. (New) A method according to claim 32, wherein the message is sent automatically.

91. (New) A method according to claim 50 and including assigning an identification code to each part wherein identical parts in different systems of the aircraft have different codes.